

107TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES. 234

Reiterating the sense of the Senate that religious freedom is a priority of the United States in the bilateral relationship with the Russian Federation, including within the context of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 10, 2002

Mr. SMITH of Oregon (for himself, Mrs. CLINTON, Mr. HARKIN, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. WARNER, Mr. WELLSTONE, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. BAYH, Mr. HATCH, Mr. McCONNELL, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. CLELAND, Mr. LIEBERMAN, Mr. ALLEN, Mr. HAGEL, Mr. NELSON of Florida, Mr. REID, Mr. NICKLES, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. FEINGOLD, Mr. CONRAD, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. GRAHAM, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. REED, Mr. CORZINE, Mr. WYDEN, and Mr. JOHNSON) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Finance

RESOLUTION

Reiterating the sense of the Senate that religious freedom is a priority of the United States in the bilateral relationship with the Russian Federation, including within the context of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment.

Whereas religious freedom and minority rights have always been a priority of the United States Congress and the American people;

Whereas the Russian Federation has experienced a miraculous revival of religious life since the collapse ten years

ago, especially with respect to the historically persecuted Russian Jewish community;

Whereas the Russian Government has publicly welcomed the participation of faith communities in national life;

Whereas the Department of State's International Religious Freedom Report (October 2001), submitted to Congress in compliance with Section 102(b) of the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) of 1998, details numerous and widespread restrictions upon minority faiths under Russia's 1997 Religion Law;

Whereas Deputy Prime Minister Valentina Matvienko said on October 23 that the Russian government is working on amendments to the Religion Law still further to restrict the activities of foreign groups on Russian territory;

Whereas the International Religious Freedom Report also details a series of Russian Government actions during the past year that have interfered with the functioning of Jewish community institutions;

Whereas "Izvestiya" reported on November 6 that no one in Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) is assigned to handle extremist and racist movements, while nationalist and anti-Semitic extremists continue to spread propaganda and incite violence in incidents across Russia;

Whereas Russia has accepted international obligations, including those specified in the 1990 Copenhagen Document of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, to allow ethnic and religious minorities "to establish and maintain their own educational, cultural and religious institutions, organizations or associations";

Whereas 98 Senators wrote to President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation on August 3, 2001, recognizing

individual instances of progress but expressing concern over the anti-Semitic rhetoric heard at both the national and local levels of Russian society and politics;

Whereas, on October 24, 2001, by unanimous consent, the Senate passed Amendment SA 1948 to the Foreign Operations FY 2002 Appropriations Bill (H.R. 2506), instructing that funds for the Government of the Russian Federation be conditioned upon the President's certification to Congress that the Russian Government "has not implemented any statute, executive order, regulation, or other similar government action that would discriminate, or would have as its principal effect discrimination, against religious groups or religious communities in the Russian Federation in violation of accepted international agreements on human rights and religious freedoms to which the Russian Federation is a party";

Whereas the Congress passed Title IV of the Trade Act of 1974 ("the Jackson-Vanik Amendment") "to assure the continued dedication of the United States to fundamental human rights";

Whereas the Jackson-Vanik Amendment focuses on free emigration as a condition for granting Normal Trade Relations to non-market economies, including authority for the President to waive this restriction upon certifying that a country was permitting free emigration;

Whereas the President stated on November 13, 2001, that Russia has made important strides on emigration and the protection of religious and ethnic minorities, "including Russia's Jewish community. On this issue, Russia is in a fundamentally different place than it was during the Soviet era. President Putin told me that these gains for freedom will be protected and expanded";

Whereas the President further stated: “Our Foreign Ministers have sealed this understanding in an exchange of letters. Because of this progress, my administration will work with Congress to end the application of Jackson-Vanik Amendment to Russia”;

Whereas the exchange of letters between the Secretary of State and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia underscored Russian and U.S. commitments on human rights and religious freedoms, including restitution of communal properties seized during the Soviet era, the revival of minority communities, and combating xenophobia and anti-Semitism;

Whereas, in meeting with Senate leadership on November 13, 2001, President Putin reiterated his commitment to working with the United States and with the Congress on advancing civil society and human rights in his country;

Whereas the President of the United States issued a “Religious Freedom Day 2002” Proclamation on January 16, 2002, saying “I encourage all Americans to renew their commitment to protecting the liberties that make our country a beacon of hope for people around the world who seek the free exercise of religious beliefs and other freedoms”; and

Whereas the Russian Federation has proven to be a critical ally in the war on international terrorism in which the civilized world is currently engaged: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That it is the sense of the Senate that—

2 (1) within the context of productive and con-

3 structive relations between the governments and peo-

4 ples of the United States and the Russian Federa-

1 tion, religious freedom and the protection of minor-
2 ity rights must remain as priority issues on the bi-
3 lateral agenda of both countries;

4 (2) any actions by the United States Govern-
5 ment to “graduate” or terminate the application of
6 the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to any individual
7 country must take into account the progress already
8 achieved through the application of the amendment
9 as well as appropriate assurances regarding the con-
10 tinued commitment of that government to enforcing
11 and upholding the fundamental human rights envi-
12 sioned in the amendment; and

13 (3) the United States Government must dem-
14 onstrate how, in “graduating” individual countries,
15 the “continued dedication of the United States” to
16 these fundamental rights will be assured.

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